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ABSTRACT

The basic question under study was whether, or to what extent, the regular use of a library induces a modification in the user's structure of tastes and activities. In the spring of 1972, detailed interviews were conducted with 400 library users and 200 matched nonusers in two middle sized Hungarian towns. Interviewees were asked to evaluate, on a scale of 1 to 5, the attractiveness of 16 leisure or cultural activities and 11 kinds of television programs, first to themselves and second to the general population. The same people were revisited in 1974, and, by the reuse of the original research instruments, judgements were made as to the presupposed changes in favor of the library users, in the rise of their cultural demands to a higher level. The results, showing the varieties of values between users and nonusers, plus individual changes over two years, indicate a greater achievement motivation among users. Since such motivation is developed in early childhood, it is recommended that attention be focused on providing children with improved library services and with stimulating role models. (SL)

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(Hungarian People's Republic)

INVESTIGATION OF EFFECTIVENESS IN A LIBRARY

(Preliminary report of a longitudinal investigation)

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CENTRE FOR LIBRARY SCIENCE AND METHODOLOGY at the NATIONAL SZÉCHÉNYI LIBRARY

Budapest, 1974.

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Attila NAGY

INVESTIGATION OF EFFECTIVENESS IN A LIBRARY *

/Preliminary report of a longitudinal investigation/

With the increase of investigations of the sociology of reading we get increasingly more information on how definite social strata read, when, what, how much and why, how reading is embeded in their leisure time and to what extent it has become an integral part of their way of living. As for investigations of the psychology of reading, they inform us more emphatically on the influence of spiritual processes and properties, under which works are chosen, understood, evaluated and their spirit entered into. In principle, among a number of decisive factors also the effect of the library is implied - directly or indirectly - by the result of every investigation of the sociology or psychology of reading. However, since investigations are directed at the general, so to say all sociological and psychological problems of reading, we do

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* The plan and methods of the investigation were drawn up and elaborated under the guidance of László Halász.

The research report containing the putting of questions in detail, the methods as well as the characteristics of the initial stage is hoped to be available by the time of the conference: László Halász-Attila Nagy: Hatásvizsgálat könyvtárban I. /Investigations of effectiveness in a library./Bp. 1974. N.P.I.

not treat separately what the library in particular means to the reader. Our research is directed exactly at this area unexplored so far.

It is naturally obvious that the library takes effect together with other institutions of society, is bound by many a tie to the complicated system of relationships within which it operates.

Primarily one's initial stage, the family background, the occupation of parents, the richness of the permanently surrounding environment in cultural stimuli from early childhood, one's education, place in the division of labour, leisure time that can be spent on culture, the characteristic established way of cognitive activity, the style of processing knowledge and experiences, the prestige of art and science and the book in particular in a given society, stratum or group play an outstanding role in defining a person's cultural - and within this reading - demands, interest, and taste measurable by his capacity for selection.

The aim of the investigation

It is obvious that a radical qualitative change in the formation of readers' demands, interest and taste can be expected only if the whole line of effects operates differently from the previous period, i. e. more favourably. Naturally the foregoing do not mean that a single factor may not have at the same time relative independence within the complex line of effects. The question that interests us most is the following: what happens in consequence of the intervention of the library /librarian/ in this line of effects? Our aim is to approach the answer one step at least to the following question: how can a particular - though still modest - surplus be added to the selective, re-

ceptive and evaluative activity of the reader by the library as an institution with definite material and personal conditions, how can this surplus be apprehended? Earlier investigations* have proved beyond all question that library use implies a particular surplus and a higher level of demands. However, we know little about the particular role played by the library in the creation and accumulation of the indicated cultural pre-eminence.

From the very first do more agile and active people come under the spell of libraries and only increase their original advantage? Or can even the use of the library in itself induce and generate the modification of the structure of tastes and activities? To what extent does regular library attendance accelerate the readers' activity of accumulating values? Does library use bring about - if so, to what extent - demonstrable changes in the edification of the personality and in the structure of the consumption of cultural commodities?

The strategy of investigation

They were our basic questions when, in the spring of 1972, we interviewed in extreme detail nearly 400 readers selected at random in two central public libraries of two county seats. Simultaneously we interviewed nearly 200 nonreaders characteriz-

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* Péter Mándi: Könyvolvasás és könyvvásárlás Magyarországon. /Reading and purchase of books in Hungary/. Budapest, KTTK, 1965./

István Kamarás: Munkások és az olvasás. /Workers and reading/. /Budapest, N. P. I. 1969./

István Kamarás - Péter Polónyi: Értelmiség, olvasás, könyvtár. /Intellectuals, reading, library/. /Budapest, N. P. I.1970.

Attila Nagy: Institutions of general culture in the chief towns of districts. /Budapest, N. P. I. 1972./

ed by the same demographical and sociological conditions /on the basis of previously fixed questionnaires/ about the characteristics of their cultural activity. We visited the same persons with the passing of two years, in 1974, again, and by the reuse of the research instruments used on the first occasion we judged the reality of the different degrees of presupposed - or rather desired - changes in favour of the readers, the rise of their demands to a higher level. A considerable part of our efforts was used to collect as various displays of reading people as possible under relatively exact and reproducible circumstances. Accordingly we tried to enforce the necessary complexity in setting up our investigative apparatus.

The important criteria of our research instruments were the following: the comparison of the opinion of the use of leisure time and data of the actual spending of leisure time with special regard to cultural activities; subsequent, supplementary and controlling tracing of actual reading habits observed for a longer time, the evaluation of categories of reading materials in the library - at home - and parts of poems recited in an experimental situation as well as reproductions of paintings, approach to the relationship with personality traits and culture. Our method was characterized by the use of evaluations expressed in actual choice, degrees of scale and informal expositions of motives as well as double evaluations in the case of a number of items alike in order to emphasize the difference between adjustments to expectations, between "I should like it so" and "It is so" as well as to reflect the difference between the image of oneself and of others as clearly as possible.

Our investigation was carried out in two particularly modern public libraries in Veszprém and Szombathely /middle-size towns with populations of 40 thousand and 70 thousand respectively/. Though we strove for the proportionate represen-

tation of the most diverse educational levels in the sample, the choice of the locations implied that the educational level, consequently the average level of culture of the interviewees, rose above the national level. Accordingly the eight forms of the primary school is the lower limit of the persons under survey.

This report was compiled after the repetition of the investigation in 1974, however, in the course of its detailed processing. Therefore our initial questions cannot be answered explicitly yet, however, we have formulated some remarkable statements with regard to the surplus of library users, based on the first investigation as well as on the changes already reflected in some cases, depending on the results of the second investigation.

The results

We could prove the process of becoming more cultured and the rise of the level of one's demands - if any measurable change can occur with the passage of two years at least - by the content of spending the leisure time, the enrichment of the content of activities above all things. At the start the existing situation had to be explored as exactly as possible, therefore, among others, we asked the interviewees to evaluate from double aspects sixteen kinds of leisure activities and eleven kinds of television programs:

A: To what extent do they consider as attractive the sixteen kinds of activities as well as eleven television programs enumerated by us?

B: In their opinion what do people think of the pastimes and programs in question in general?

They could express their opinions by giving marks from 1 to 5.

The combined hierarchy of activities from which individual groups under survey typically deviated was the following:

On the scale of five degrees, fiction, reading of newspapers, excursions /sports/, theatre-going, television viewing and listening-in were given average marks round the whole number 4. Among activities considered as least attractive were card-playing, going to sports events and - probably because of its exclusiveness - also fine arts. Going to museums and cinemas, reading of professional literature, going to concerts, walking, engaging in handicrafts and social life are bunched together in the middle area /given marks between the whole numbers 3 and 4/.

In the case of television programs in the combined hierarchy - independent of individual groups - news service which can be hardly considered as a television form ranks among literary and other programs popularizing scientific knowledge which are appreciated most. This second place probably characterizes the viewers' hunger for information rather than the level of programs of newsreel character. Telecasts of sports events and operas /concerts/ occupy the two last places. The middle of the field bunched together with diverse values. Naturally individual subgroups deviate from the above global picture significantly here, too.

From the very wide range of aspects of analysis only the remarkable differences among groups are emphasized here. The fact that library users set higher value on the study of professional literature, concerts, theatre or literary programs etc. of the television than non-users is not particularly surprising, therefore need not be illustrated by data - among other factors exactly

that's why they go to libraries. The way the images of "themselves" and of "others" and the systems of preferences appear in some groups under survey, the two nearly merge into each other or definitely separate, has a diagnostic value in turn.

In the following figures /figs. 1, 2,3, 4/ always a pair of curves runs together, where one of them /indicated as ———/ represents the averages of group of judgments of themselves, while the other /indicated as ---/ represents the imaginary, general images of others.

The areas between the curves /hatched fields/ show the relative distance between the two images. Two trends are worthy of attention:

1. The scales of preferences in the two groups /library users and non-users/ definitely differ with regard to the magnitude and order of succession of average values as well.

2. But the area of fields closed in by the two curves is different in the two groups.

From now on, when we speak of differences, deviations /probability: $p = 0,01$ and $p = 0,05$/ confirmed by significance calculations by the "t-test" are referred to and the detailed and numerical presentation of results is disregarded only for the sake of intelligibility.

For this reason there are occupations which "I" consider as much more important than "others", e. g. reading, going to theatres and art-exhibitions, at the same time "others" prefer television viewing, cards and match-going.

The marks imply a kind of divergence which creates distance, makes a distinction on the scale of values, however, not in equal

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The evaluation of television programs in the experimental group

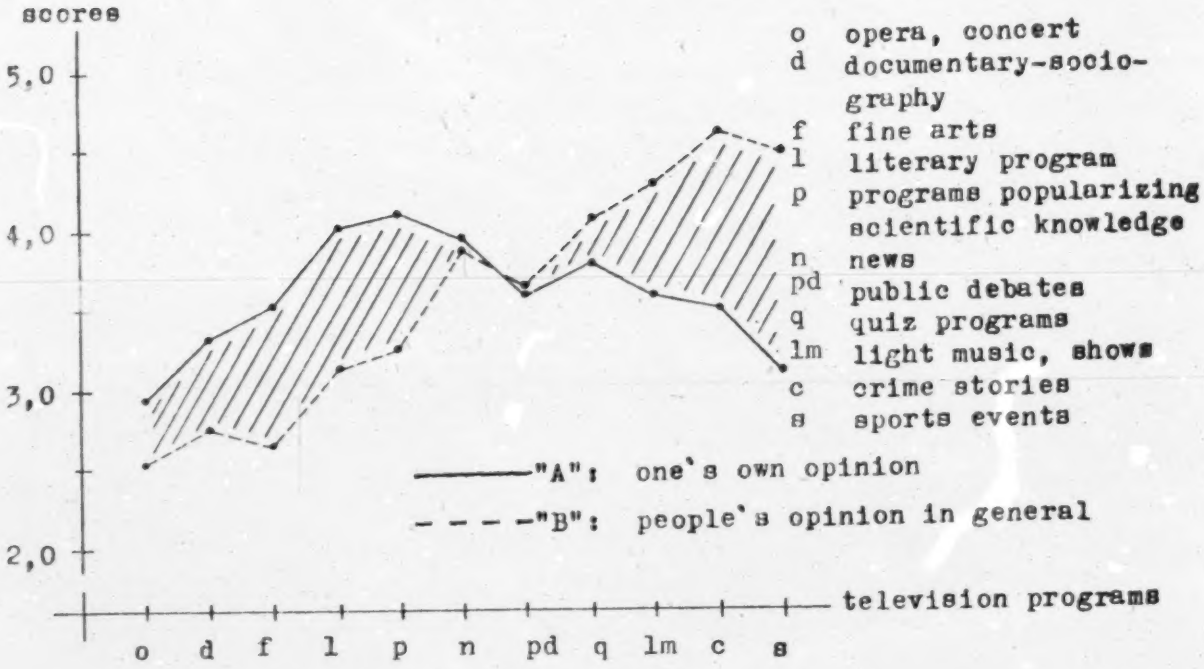

Fig. 1.

measure. In the experimental group /here the hatched fields are larger/ this separating tendency to emphasize themselves and separate themselves from the others by marked features is stronger since examining the average marks of the group we do not find significant difference between evaluations from "A" and "B" aspects in three cases only. In turn the results of the control group are identical in eight cases, therefore the hatched fields are considerably smaller. That is to say the members of the group which does not go to library feel themselves rather similar to others, more exactly they are less capable of separating their ideas of themselves and of the general "others".

The group of library users is rather willing to widen the

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The evaluation of television programs in the control group

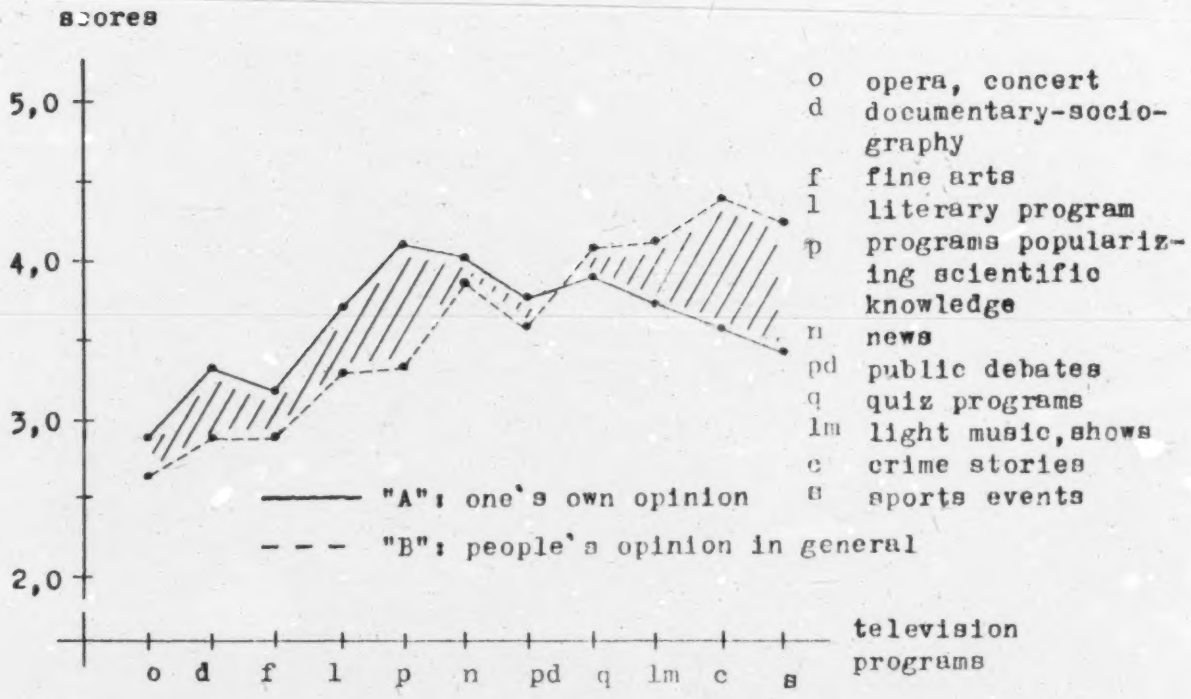

Fig. 2.

gap in double evaluations between "I" and "the others", i. e. their own accepted norms and the others' supposed norms. Namely they do this according to the value of the given possibility of spending the leisure time. If the value is high, their own judgments are more favourable than the others' judgments in their own opinion, if the value is low, they do just the very opposite.

Accordingly, the members of the experimental group imply a more definite profile, a more characteristic and differentiated system of cultural values even in the initial stage.

We have no evidence of the change of the above-mentioned differences with the passing of two years yet - but the situation of the concrete use of time of the examined persons, their so-called time budget is different.

In 1972 and 1974 alike a complete time budget of two days

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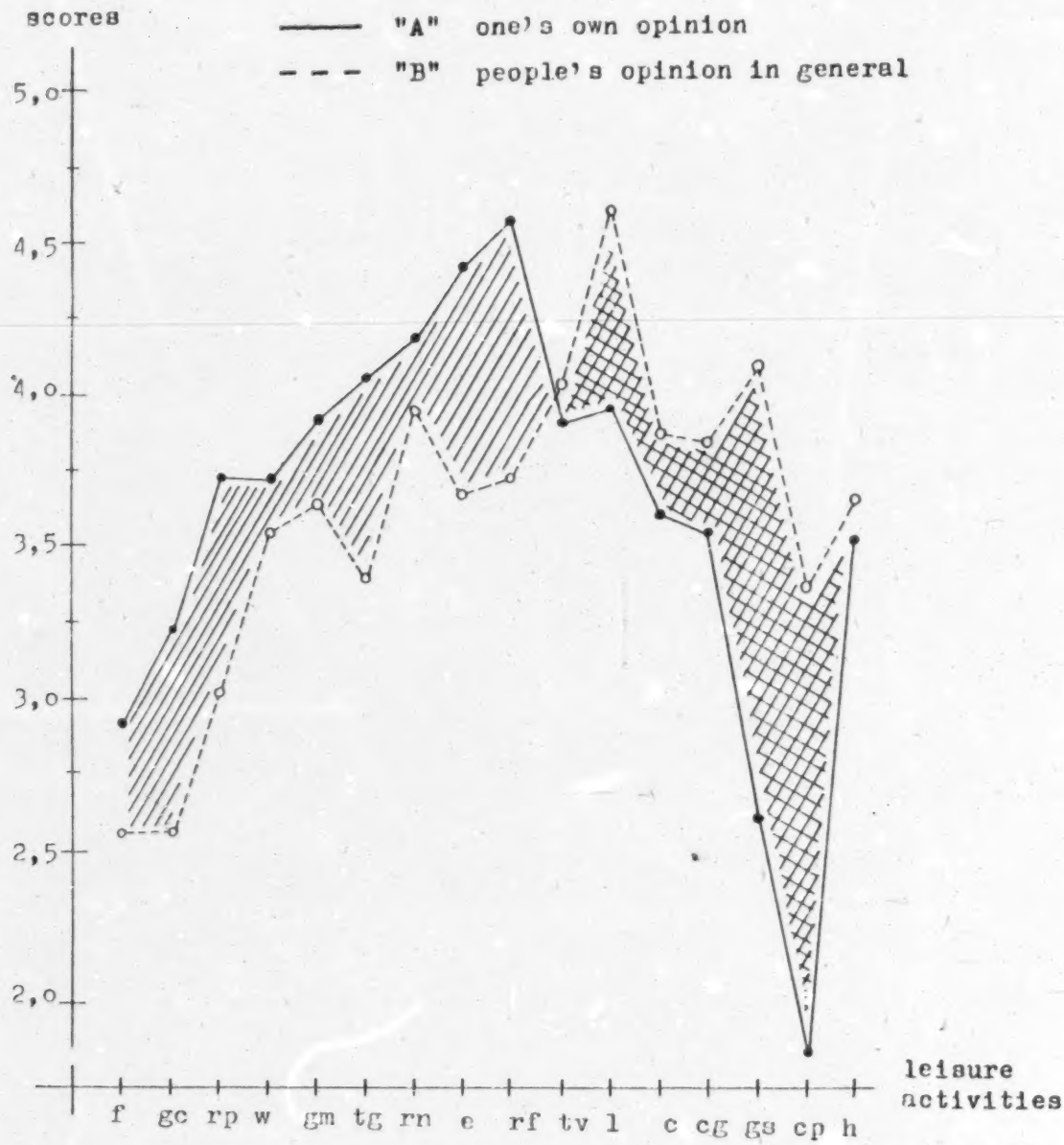
The evaluation of leisure activities in the experimental group



f	fine arts	tg	theatre-going	l	listening-in
gc	going to concerts	rn	reading of newspapers	c	conversation
rp	reading of professional lit.	e	excursion/sport/	cg	cinema-going
w	walking	rf	reading of fiction	gs	going to sports events
gm	going to museums	tv	television viewing	cp	card-playing
				h	handicrafts

Fig. 3.

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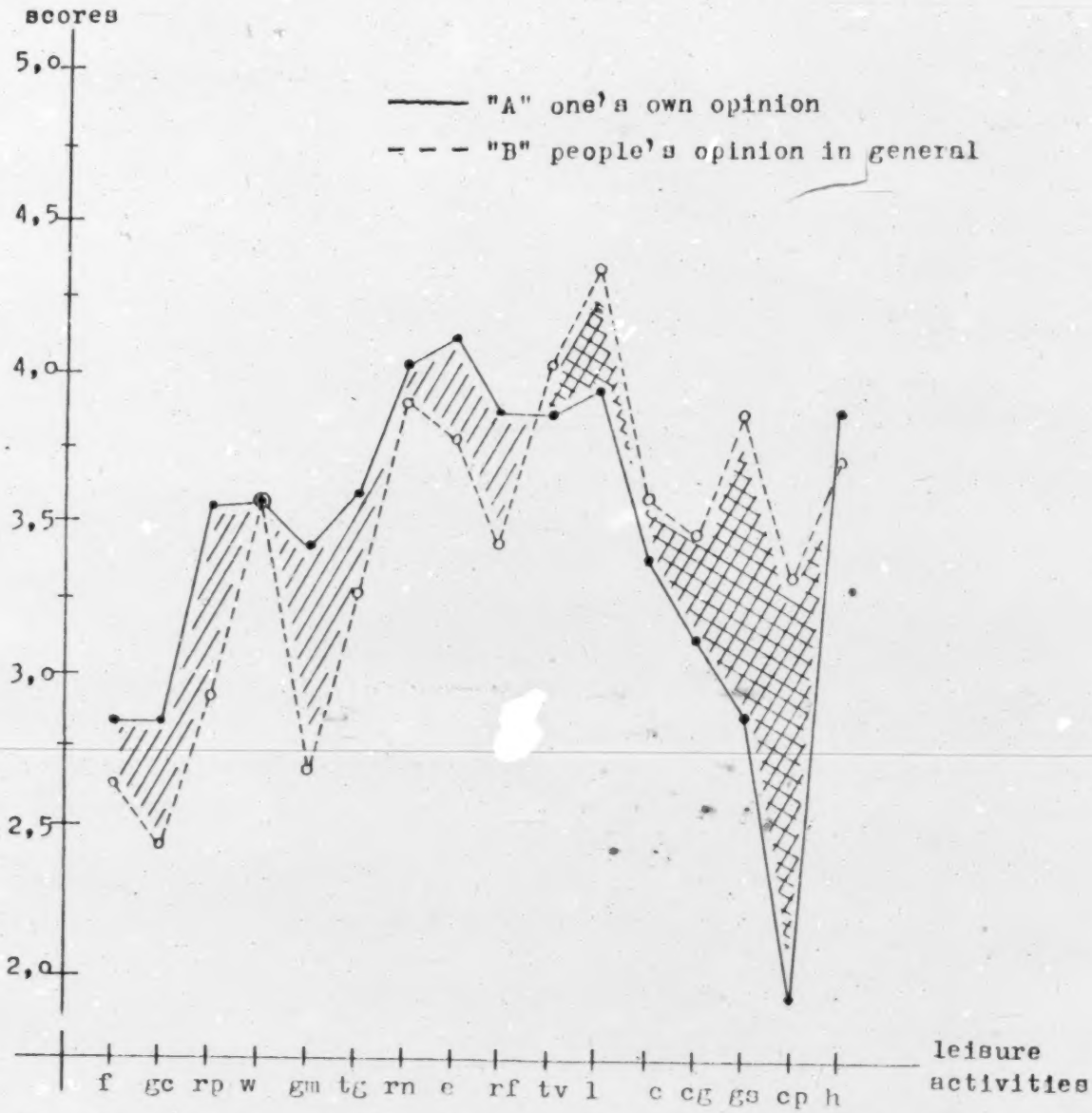
The evaluation of leisure activities in the control group



f	fine arts	tg	theatre-going	l	listening-in
gc	going to concerts	rn	reading of news-	c	conversation
rp	reading of pro-		papers	cg	cinema-going
	fessional lit.	e	excursion/sport/	gs	going to sports
w	walking	rf	reading of fiction		events
gm	going to museums	tv	television viewing	cp	card-playing
				h	handicrafts

Fig. 4.

of every interviewee /their worktime and leisure time on a Wednesday and a Sunday/ was compiled.

Even the first investigation showed marked differences which have not levelled up in the course of two years but have become even more marked.

The non-users are characterized by a kind of more measured, airier, more leisure way of living while the library users in the experimental group are characterized by the more stressed, denser structure of activities and more substantial use of time. To take an example, let us examine the group attributes of the Sunday timetable /fig. 5./.

/At the foot of the columns the data of the first investigation /1972/, at the top those of the survey of 1974 are shown, the numbers with signs represent the direction and extent of change./

The persons in the control group sleep more, wash and breakfast more leisurely /physiological activities/, at the same time undertake less housework and the time frame of cultural activities is narrower /1 hour!/. For the sake of brevity I do not give full details of the data for Wednesday where the same tendencies are conspicuous.

It is worth taking a closer look at the partially broken-down contents of the change in the cultural block increased by some half-hour compared to Wednesday.

The time spent on television viewing was increased in every group nearly in equal measure /15-20 minutes/ but the column for Sunday grew only in the case of non-readers. This growth is worthy of attention because the original level /2,22 hours per capita/ was rather high /cf. fig. 6./

This occurrence is the opposite with regard to time spent on reading books and journals. Here the originally existing surplus characteristic of library users does not change conspicuous-

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The average data of the time budget for Sunday broken down into groups

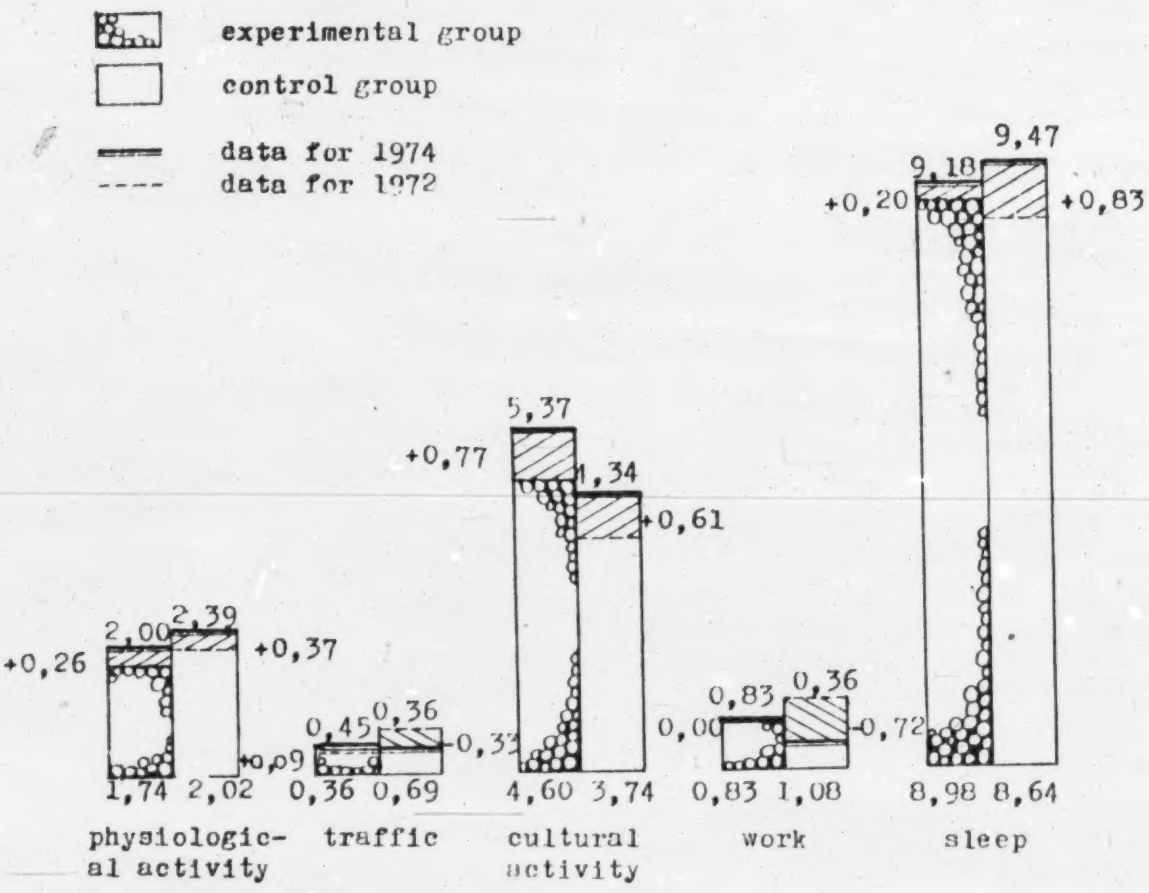

Fig. 5.

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The average time per capita spent on television viewing as well as reading of books and journals broken down into groups

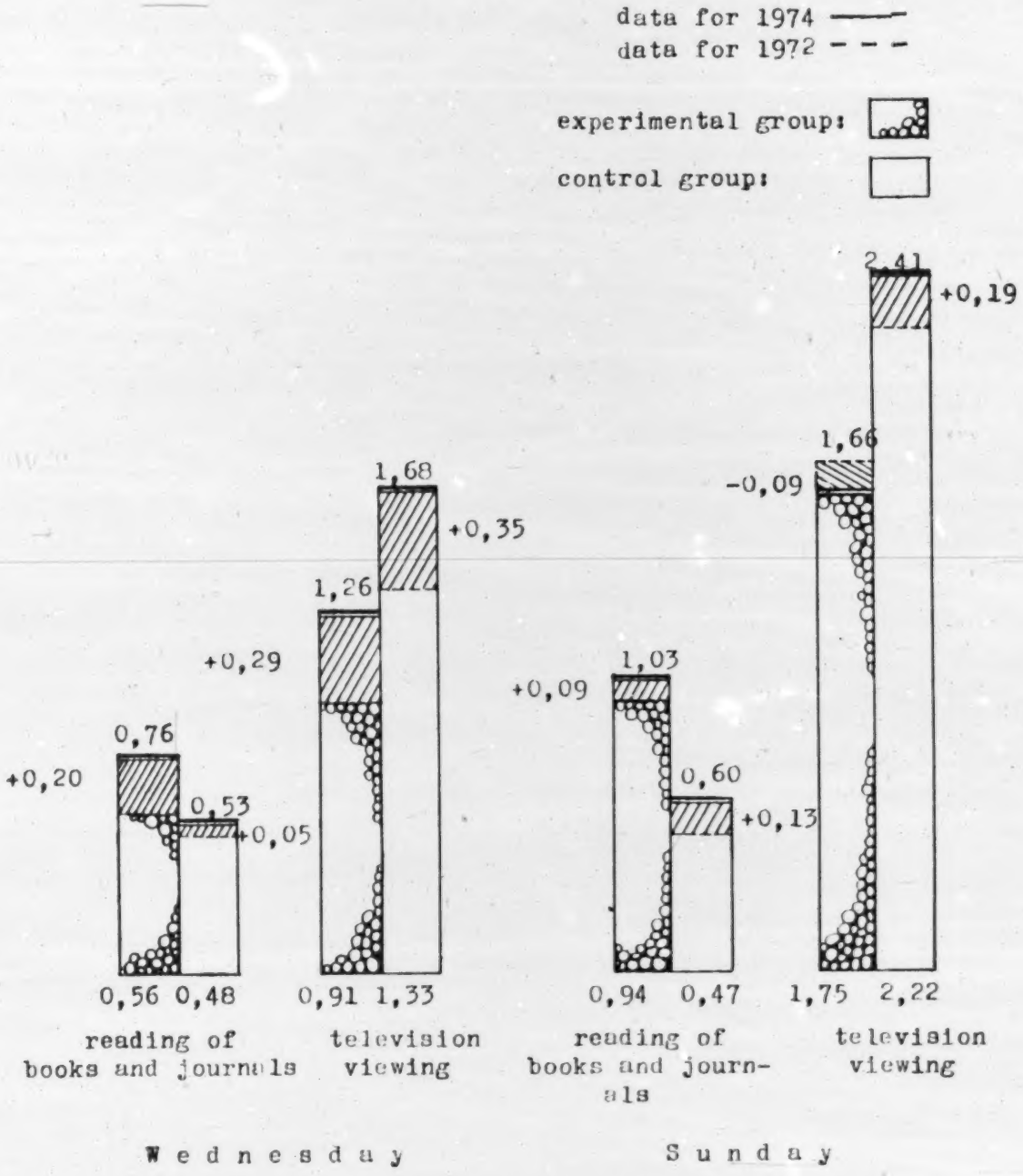

Fig. 6.

ly, however, above the level of perceptibility. Library readers read for three-quarters instead of half-hour on weekdays while the control ensemble retains the original half-hour. On Sunday practically both groups remained true to their character and retained the 30-minute difference as well.

Hence the reality of the attitude setting significantly higher value on fiction and professional literature is controllable in the experimental group - let us recall the preceding page - since the time spent on reading on Sundays is about twice as much as in the case of the control group.

The picture becomes richer if, in addition to differences of time frames, we study the actual reading material on Sundays, also broken down into categories. In order to facilitate analysis absolute numbers are left out, at the same time indicating again - what is of course deducible from the differences of time frames, too - that the persons in the control ensemble mentioned less books, i. e. in addition to qualitative differences to be illustrated just now there are quantitative differences as well. Accordingly the breakdown of reading materials for Sundays expressed in percentage is the following:

Structure of reading materials on the basis of the data of the time budget for Sunday

categories of reading material	1972 experimental group	1972 control group	1974 experimental group	1974 control group
	%	%	%	%
romantical	6	11	2	11
lecture	20	28	19	9
lecture-realistic	5	9	9	20
realistic	18	22	13	17
realistic-modern	15	6	13	9
modern	8	0	11	3
educational /higher level/	14	11	17	9
educational /lower level/	5	13	9	9
juvenile	6	0	3	11
other	3	0	4	2
Total	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %
no. of works:	87	46	64	35

Nine kinds of reading material are contained in our table - accordingly the numbers are broken down and low - but even thus the categories we used are almost improperly broad, much too global, e. g. in the case of lecture or realistic-classic groups because in the former there are common crime stories together with aesthetically valueless works of low standard which still are connected with the present age, in the latter the realistic-classics of the 19th and 20th centuries are together out of necessity.

Well, as is shown by the table, library users do not read books simply longer on days of rest but the level of their choice is considerably higher as can be read in the detailed comparisons by categories and groups. The differences in choice are not really significant if we study the percentages of lecture and realistic categories as well as of those verging on them but the modern, valuable educational reading materials of scientific level /MO + ED S./ as the two most valuable categories together.

1. Block of reading material of higher level
   /MO + ED S. - modern, artistic fiction and educational works of scientific level/

	Group One /experimental/		Group Two /control/	
The proportion was	22 %	:	11 %	still in 1972, but
it became	28 %	:	12 %	in 1974 in favour of library users

If we take the opposite, i. e. we arrange works of lower level /romantical, juvenile, lecture, lecture-realistic borderline cases/ in the same group, it becomes obvious that the standard of better attitudes of higher level becomes still higher while less selective attitudes rather bent on relaxation even deteriorate a bit, or do not improve at all. Accordingly the original difference of 10 percent nearly doubled, the gap between levels of taste manifest in the capacity for selection widened more.

2. Block of reading material of lower level
/RO + JU + LE + LE-RE - romantical, juvenile, lecture, lecture-realistic/

	Group One /experimental/	:	Group Two /control/
In 1972	37 %	:	48 %
In 1974	33 %	:	51 %

Here groups of the same educational level, occupation and social status are under discussion. Hence we do not see the opening of the shanks of the cultural scissors in a classical sense. We could conclude this deductively at the very most since certain strata use the services of institutions serving the transmission of culture, i. e. also libraries, less as a rule. However, we cannot follow this otherwise extremely important direction for it is not the main target of our research.

The above-mentioned qualitative differences in the structure of reading material are corroborated by the lines of data compiled with regard to the content of private libraries. The questionnaires of the first investigation inquired about the quantity of these works only. However, since here we did not find essential differences characteristic of individual groups, at the same time the otherness of the structure of the reading material was striking even then - in the course of the second investigation it seemed desirable to inquire about the quality and content over and above quantity.

With this end in view we compiled a list of thirty items, indicating the authors /without the titles of works/ for a greater part and the interviewees were requested to fill in the

titles they owned - if any - by the authors in question.

After the summary of information gained in this way we may conclude - without giving full details of the data - ı not the proportion of /aesthetically less valuable/ lecture or realistic-classics is decisive for as it happens their number was almost the same nearly in every case in both groups. The frequency of the presence of contemporary valuable fiction /Böll, Bulgakov, Faulkner, Gyula Illyés, Evtushenko, László Nagy, István Örkény, Remarque, Sánta etc./ as well as of manuals /encyclopedias, dictionaries/ and technical/trade books confirmed the markedly divergent composition of the reading material of individual groups which became known earlier, the differences in taste objectified in actual choice /reading and purchase/.

Summary and perspectives

As we have striven to illustrate it on the preceding pages, the actual surplus of library users already existed in the initial stage and can be accounted for neither simply by the differences in the social situation, moreover library use somehow implies the accumulation of surplus - perhaps also as a cause.

After the partial processing and interpretation of our data naturally there will be a more favourable chance to answer this last range of questions more substantially.

We have not entertained ardent hopes of the autonomous effect of the library at the beginning of our work either, at the same time we have already got an appropriate number of strong proofs to refute complete ineffectiveness. Still let us stray from the point a bit in another direction in conclusion. What can cause changes of different nature and measure in leisure ac-

tivities and the rise of the level of taste for fiction in addition to the intensive effect of the library and librarians?

Unfortunately in the course of the first investigation /in 1972/ we have not inquired about the interviewees' perspectives and objectives. However, we managed to do it in 1974 in the following manner: "Please tell us in short how you imagine your life after 10 years?"

The most important tendencies of the analysis of the content of informal answers to the open-ended question are illustrated by our last figure /fig. 7./.

The non-users wish the significant improvement of living standards /furnishings, car etc./ the increase of leisure time and general human prosperity /calmness, harmonic life, happiness, etc./ in the future.

While the members of the experimental group - retaining the foregoing - spoke about their aspirations related to their work, advancement, learning, even academic degrees, and social activity more frequently.

Hence not the existence of perspectives or the lack of them characterizes the contrast between the two groups. A more rational and resolute ensemble - showing greater "achievement motivation", psychologically speaking - and formulating a more clear-cut picture of the future stands opposite to a group which dreams of a better, easier future without efforts, it is more passive, it wants to act less than even at present - let us recall the data of the time budget -, chooses less on a lower level and presumably shows less "achievement motivation".

The psychological investigations confirmed many times the vital importance of the motivational system in apprehending the basis of personality structure, the difficulties of amendment as well as the particular nature of its development which is linked with childhood.

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"How do you imagine your life after 10 years?"

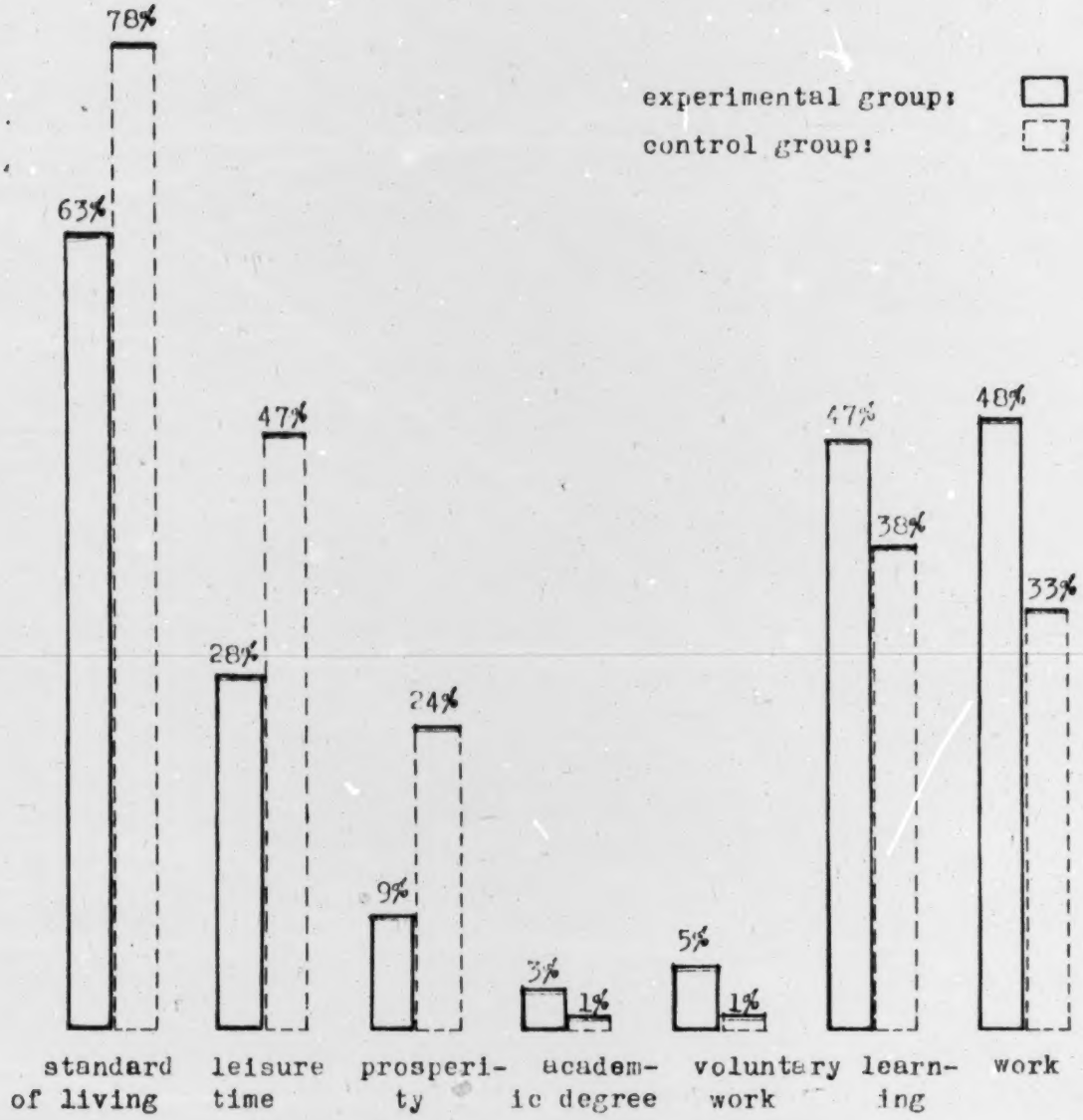

Fig. 7.

Well, if the "library" really wants to be effective, inevitably it must join the intensive childhood factors of socialization, as early as possible and for as many children as possible. Much more, well-equipped and more attractive children's and school libraries are needed - naturally in harmony with the development of the network of kindergartens and primary schools developing and modernized more rapidly than the present rate if we want to see youth and adults actively improve their mind, choose and judge on a high level and be able to recognize the good and the bad, valuable and less valuable definitely.

Another important condition of the grafting of achievement motivation and its spreading by "infection" is attachment to persons, direct regular interpersonal relationship with sympathetic, culture personalities worthy of imitation, who can and will want to mediate.

Are the human conditions of intensive effect fulfilled, are reference librarians suitable and prepared to the mediator's role, which is to plant and to develop motives, aims, efforts, and stimuli?

We shall speak more about this, too, on completion of another investigation of the human conditions of library work and library profession.

Az OSZK Könyvtártudományi és Módszertani Központ kiadványa. Felelős kiadó: Papp István igazgató. Kiadóhivatal: 1827 Budapest, VIII. Múzeum u 3. Készült az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár házi sokszorosító üzeme KMK részlegében. Budapest, V. Guszev u 1. Felelős vezető: Farkas Jánosné. 79/74